



File Code: 1950
Date: February 10, 2020

Dear Interested Party,

We have completed an environmental assessment (EA) for the Homestead project on the St. Joe Ranger District. The EA is a site-specific evaluation of management activities proposed in the project area. The project area is located on National Forest System Lands near Avery, Idaho on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF). The project area is approximately 16,757 acres, which includes 16,717 acres of National Forest System lands, in the Daveggio, Homestead, and Shearer Creek drainages, all tributaries of Marble Creek, which flows into the St. Joe River.

The project area covers National Forest System Lands in the IPNF Forest Plan Management Areas (MA) 4a Research Natural Area (approximately 306 acres), MA 5 Backcountry (approximately 1,837 acres), and MA 6 General Forest (approximately 14,570 acres) located in Shoshone County, Idaho, south of the town of Avery. It is located in all or portions of sections 8, 9, 13-17, 20-24, 25-29, 33-36 in T. 44 N., R. 3 E.; and sections 6-8, 17, 18, 19-21, 27-30, 31-34 in T. 44 N., R. 4 E.; and sections 1-3 in T. 43 N., R. 3 E., Boise Meridian.

Reconnaissance indicates that existing conditions for vegetation composition, structure, and health in the Homestead project area deviate from the desired conditions described in the 2015 Land Management (Forest) Plan for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. Objectives of the Homestead project are to establish and maintain resilient forest stand structure and species composition across the landscape; contribute to employment and income in local communities by providing forest products from National Forest System lands; maintain or improve hydrological connectivity, reduce the potential of high-intensity wildfire and update the Motor Vehicle Use Map.

The proposed action includes approximately 1219 acres of commercial timber harvest and non-commercial vegetation management activities with reforestation of appropriate tree species in harvest units. The project proposes 202 acres of whitebark pine restoration. Watershed improvement activities are proposed in Marble Creek to improve water quality and aquatic habitat in the project area. Road management activities on Forest System Roads include constructing approximately 4 miles of new roads and 2.9 miles of temporary roads, reconstructing and maintenance on 37.9 miles of existing roads, and storing 12.5 miles of roads or road segments. Approximately 2.7 miles of roads that are currently not part of the system will be added the National Forest System. Approximately 25.8 miles of nonsystem roads, generally old skid trails or brushed-in spurs that are mostly impassable and do not provide legal public access would be decommissioned.

The EA, maps, supporting documents, scoping comments and other information are available for your review on the project webpage <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53049>. Your comments are very important to determining the best course of action in the project area. Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, and electronic comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of legal notice in the *Coeur d'Alene Press* newspaper. Written comments must be mailed, or hand-delivered to St. Joe Ranger District, 222 South 7th Street, St. Maries, Idaho, 83861. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 12:30p.m- 4:00



p.m., excluding federal holidays. Comments may be provided by fax to (208) 245- 6052 (ATTN: Project Leader for Homestead Project). Electronic comments can be submitted on the project website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53049>. Email comments to comments-northern-idpanhandle-stjoe@fs.fed.us (Subject: Comments – Homestead Project).

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period and to ensure that their comments have been received when they are submitted electronically. Comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for myself as the Responsible Official to consider. Comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project, available for public inspection, and released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

In March 2020, the IPNF will be transitioning to GovDelivery, an electronic delivery system (email). After launching in March, you can take advantage of electronic delivery, by subscribing to this project, and others on the GovDelivery sign up page at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/ipnf>. If you would like to remain on the postal mail list, please contact us.

If you have questions about the Homestead Project, please contact the Project Leader, Beth Reinhart at (208) 245-2531 or email at mary.reinhart@usda.gov.

Sincerely,



Matthew A. Davis

District Ranger

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